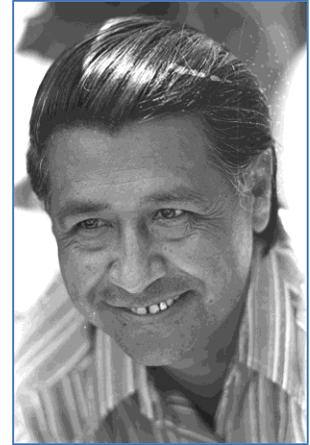




WHO WAS CÉSAR CHÁVEZ?

César Chávez was a Mexican American labor activist, civil rights advocate and leader of the United Farm Workers. During the 1960s and 70s, he was a leading voice for migrant farm workers. His leadership focused national attention on these laborers' working conditions, which eventually led to improvements.

In 2008, President Obama proclaimed March 31 César Chávez Day in the United States, urging Americans to "observe this day with appropriate service." Several states—California, Arizona, Colorado, Michigan, New Mexico, Texas, Utah and Wisconsin—observe the day by closing schools and state offices. This lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn more about César Chávez, the strategies he used to create change for the migrant farm workers and to analyze and reflect on modern day civil rights and labor struggles.



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Grade Level: grades 6–12

Common Core Anchor Standards: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening

Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn more about César Chávez and the migrant farm workers movement of the 1960s.
- Students will analyze quotes by César Chávez in the context of what they know about him.
- Students will investigate several modern day labor struggles and present or write a critical analysis of them, including comparisons to the farm workers movement.

Material:

- *Mini-Bio: César Chávez* video (4 mins., Biography Channel, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ns5NMHTk-yY)
- [KWL \("Know, Want to Know, Learned"\) Chart](#)
- César Chávez (History Channel, www.history.com/topics/cesar-chavez)
- "Cesar Chavez, 66, Organizer of Union For Migrants, Dies" (*The NY Times*, Obituary, April 24, 1993, www.nytimes.com/1993/04/24/obituaries/cesar-chavez-66-organizer-of-union-for-migrants-dies.html?pagewanted=1)
- The Story of César Chávez—The Beginning (The United Farm Workers, www.ufw.org/page.php?menu=research&inc=history/07.html)
- An American Hero: The Biography of César E. Chávez (http://chavez.cde.ca.gov/ModelCurriculum/Teachers/Lessons/Resources/Biographies/K-2_Bio.aspx)
- [Quotes from César Chávez](#)

Advanced Preparation: Cut the [Quotes of César Chávez](#) into individual strips and set aside.

Vocabulary:

Review the following vocabulary words and make sure students know their meanings. (See ADL's "[Glossary of Education Terms](#).")

- Boycott
- Brutality
- Collective Bargaining
- Dissent
- Exploited
- Hunger Strike
- Immigrant
- Injustice
- Labor
- Meager
- Migrant Farm workers
- Nonviolence
- Protest
- Strike
- Union

WARM UP: WHO IS CÉSAR CHÁVEZ?

1. If you think your students know something about César Chávez prior to the lesson, begin by asking: *Who is César Chávez? What do you know about him?* Record their responses on the board.
2. If your students do not know anything about him, begin the lesson by watching this 4-minute video: [Mini-Bio: César Chávez](#).
3. During the course of the lesson, you will complete the *KWL* ("*Know, Want to Know, Learned*") Chart as a whole class. Distribute the chart to each student and have them fill it out as you complete it on board. In KWL, the "K" represents what students already know. Fill in this section of the chart after asking students what they know about César Chávez, writing in their responses. To discern where they got the information, ask: *"How do you know that? Where did you learn that?"*
4. The next part of the chart is "W," representing what students want to know. This will be a process that you will come back to a few times because as they learn more, they will want to know more.
5. Ask students: *What more do you want to know about César Chávez? What other questions do you have about him or his life?"* Fill in their responses under "Want to Know." (The last part of the chart is "L" in which students, at other points in the lesson, will fill in what they learned.)

INFORMATION SHARING

1. First, explain to students that a union is an organized group of workers who collectively use their strength to have a voice in their workplace. Through a union, workers have a right to fight for better pay, work hours, benefits, workplace health and safety, job training and other work-related issues. Having support from the union to ensure fairness and respect in the workplace is one of the key reasons workers organize.
2. Share background information about César Chávez by telling students:
 - César Chávez was a Mexican American who grew up on a farm in Yuma, Arizona with his two brothers and two sisters. His family owned a farm and a local grocery store. When he was eleven years old, hard times from the Great Depression caused Chávez's family to lose their farm. They packed up all they owned and moved to California to find work.
 - After serving in the Navy, Chávez worked in the fields for the next few years until he got a job at the Community Service Organization (CSO), a Latino rights organization. He worked for the CSO for ten years helping register voters and work for equal rights. Chavez urged Mexican Americans to

register and vote, and he traveled throughout California and made speeches in support of workers' rights. He later became CSO's national director in 1958.

- Chávez read a lot and was influenced by a number of other leaders including Mahatma Gandhi of India and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He wanted to help the migrant field workers (people who move from place to place in order to find work) of California and he thought he could do it in a peaceful manner.
 - César Chávez worked to improve the lives of other workers and immigrants. He is most famous for his role in leading a strike of California grape pickers in the 1960s. Chávez organized boycotts, strikes and protest marches in order to make lawmakers and employers grant higher wages, better living conditions and more accessible education to migrant workers.
 - Chávez and the United Farm Workers of America (UFWA) union opposed California grape growers by holding nonviolent protests. Chavez got the idea for nonviolent actions from Martin Luther King Jr. Chavez also went on hunger strikes, protesting by refusing to eat for long periods of time. In 1968, he fasted for 25 days in support of the UFW commitment to non-violence. He was inspired to fast by Mahatma Gandhi of India.
 - In 1965, the National Farm Workers Association supported a group of grape pickers who started a strike in Delano, California. César Chávez led a protest march from Delano to Sacramento, the state capital. He also convinced Americans across the country to boycott grapes in support of the striking workers. This strike did not end until 1970. In those five years, more unions and strikes in defense of migrant workers' rights began all over the United States.
 - The United Farm Workers of America (UFWA) is a labor union created from the merging of two groups, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) led by Filipino organizer Larry Itliong, and the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) led by César Chávez. The NFWA and the AWOC, recognizing their common goals and methods jointly formed the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee in 1966 and is still active today.
3. Students will learn more about Chávez in the Reading Activity below, but if you want to provide more information, see additional resources below, including two films and children's books.

READING ACTIVITY

1. After sharing some basic information, ask students: *What more do you want to know about César Chávez? What other questions do you have?* Add their responses to the "W" in the *KWL Chart*.
2. Distribute the following four articles evenly among the students. Depending on the age and reading level of your students, you may choose to use some of these articles and not all of them. Have students read their articles silently during class or for homework prior to this lesson.
 - [César Chávez](#)
 - ["Cesar Chavez, 66, Organizer of Union For Migrants, Dies"](#)
 - [The Story of César Chávez—The Beginning](#)
 - [An American Hero: The Biography of César E. Chávez](#)
3. After students read the various articles, have a whole class discussion by asking the following questions:
 - What more did you learn about César Chávez?

- Was there anything in the article that surprised you?
 - What about his life can you relate to?
 - Now that you know more about César Chávez's life, what were the essential elements in the farm workers' actions that made a difference?
 - How would you describe César Chávez's personality and character?
4. As the students share information, add their responses to the "L" (What I Learned) section of the *KWL Chart*.

IN HIS OWN WORDS: ANALYZING QUOTES

Divide the students into six small groups. Distribute one of the six *Quotes from César Chávez* to each group. Instruct them to take five minutes to read the quote aloud and then, as a group, discuss what it means to them. After five minutes, have students present their quote to the whole class and explain its meaning.

MODERN DAY CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLES

1. Tell students they will be working in small groups to learn more about modern day civil rights struggles.
2. Instruct them to work together conducting research on one of the following civil rights struggles of today:
 - **DREAM Act:** legislation to address the issue of youth who grew up in the United States and graduated from U.S. high schools but who generally derive their immigration status solely from their parents.
 - **Voting Rights:** a movement to protect and expand the freedom to vote through litigation, legislation and voter education.
 - **Fast Food Forward:** a movement of NYC fast food workers to raise wages and gain rights at work.
 - **School to Prison Pipeline:** a national trend where children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems
 - **Coalition of Immokalee Workers:** a movement in Southwest Florida to improve farmworkers' wages and working conditions.
3. Tell students that during their research they are to read at least three articles about the topic they chose and the website of the primary organization leading the work.
4. Inform them that their exploration is to culminate in a written paper and/or a small group presentation to the class. Their paper or presentation should address the following questions:
 - What is the situation or injustice that the group is working on?
 - What are the demands and possible solutions being expressed by the people impacted by the issue?
 - Share a compelling or poignant story (or quote) that reflects the need for action.
 - What strategies are being used to influence change?
 - Compare and contrast the similarities and differences to the farmworkers movement of the 1960s.
 - What progress has been made and what still needs to be done?

- What other suggestions do you have as to what they can do to affect change?

CLOSING

Ask students to share any other new information they learned or insights they have had over the course of the lesson. Add to the “L” (“What I Learned”) column on the *KWL Chart* and reflect on everything they learned.

ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- [César Chávez Foundation](#)
- “[A Civil Rights Photographer, and a Struggle, Are Remembered](#)” (*The NY Times*, November 14, 2013)
- [César E. Chávez: Introduction to Model Curriculum](#) (California Department of Education)
- “[César Chávez Movie Inspires Members of Congress](#)” (*The Huffington Post*,)
- [The Fight in the Fields: Cesar Chavez and the Farmworkers’ Struggle](#) (film, book and resources)
- *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa* by Jacques E. Levy (University of Minnesota Press, 2007)
- [César Chávez: History Is Made One Step at a Time](#) (Pantelion Films, to be released on March 28, 2014)

Children’s Books about César Chávez

- *Cesar: Si, se puede! / Yes, We Can* by Carmen T. Bernier-Grand (grades 6–8)
- *Cesar Chavez* by Ruth Franchere (grades 4–6)
- *Cesar Chavez: Labor Leader* by David Seidman (grades 6–8)
- *César Chávez: A Photographic History* by Ilan Stavans (grades 7 and up)
- *An Elegy on the Death of Cesar Chavez* by Rudolpho Anaya (grades 6–8)
- *Farmworker’s Friend: The Story of Cesar Chavez* by David R. Collins (grades 4–6)
- *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez* by Kathleen Krull (grades 3–6)
- *Side by Side: The Story of Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez* by Monica Brown (grades K–2, bilingual: English and Spanish)

COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS

Content Area/Standard
Reading
Standard 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
Writing
Standard 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
Standard 7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
Speaking and Listening
Standard 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

KWL (KNOW, WANT TO KNOW, LEARNED) CHART

Know	Want to Know	Learned

QUOTES FROM CÉSAR CHÁVEZ

Quote 1: “The picket line is the best place to train organizers. One day on the picket line is where a man makes his commitment. The longer on the picket line, the stronger the commitment. A lot of workers think they make their commitment by walking off the job when nobody sees them. But you get a guy to walk off the field when his boss is watching and, in front of the other guys, throw down his tools and march right to the picket line, that is the guy who makes our strike. The picket line is a beautiful thing because it makes a man more human.”

Quote 2: “There are vivid memories from my childhood—what we had to go through because of low wages and the conditions, basically because there was no union. I suppose if I wanted to be fair I could say that I’m trying to settle a personal score. I could dramatize it by saying that I want to bring social justice to farm workers. But the truth is that I went through a lot of hell, and a lot of people did. If we can even the score a little for the workers then we are doing something. Besides, I don’t know any other work I like to do better than this. I really don’t.”

Quote 3: “People who have lost their hunger for justice are not ultimately powerful. They are like sick people who have lost their appetite for what is truly nourishing. Such sick people should not frighten or discourage us. They should be prayed for along with the sick people who are in the hospital. The love for justice that is in us is not only the best part of our being but it is also the most true to our nature.”

Quote 4: “The road to social justice for the farm worker is the road of unionization. Our cause, our strike against table grapes and our international boycott are all founded upon our deep conviction that the form of collective self-help, which is unionization, holds far more hope for the farm worker than any other single approach, whether public or private. This conviction is what brings spirit, high hope and optimism to everything we do.”

Quote 5: “A movement with some lasting organization is a lot less dramatic than a movement with a lot of demonstrations and a lot of marching and so forth. The more dramatic organization does catch attention quicker. Over the long haul, however, it’s a lot more difficult to keep together because you’re not building solid...A lasting organization is one in which people will continue to build, develop and move when you are not there.”

Quote 6: “We have suffered unnumbered ills and crimes in the name of the Law of the Land. Our men, women and children have suffered not only the basic brutality of stoop labor, and the most obvious injustices of the system; they have also suffered the desperation of knowing that the system caters to the greed of callous men and not to our needs. Now we will suffer for the purpose of ending the poverty, the misery, and the injustice, with the hope that our children will not be exploited as we have been. They have imposed hungers on us, and now we hunger for justice.”

Quotes from Education of the Heart: Quotes by César Chávez (United Farm Workers, www.ufw.org/page.php?menu=research&inc=history/09.html)